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IS IT

THE DESPAIR OF SCIENCE?

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BY

W. D. GUNNING.

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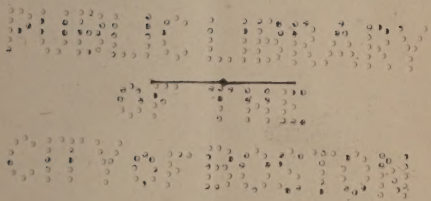

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IS IT THE DESPAIR OF SCIENCE?

STRANGE things are among us. If the witnesses are not deceived, these things are not uncommon. They occur in many a household, high as well as low. They form the staple of much talk, of some romancing, but, so far, of little philosophy. They have tinged the fancy of the poet and the novelist, but men of science have, as a class, refused to investigate them. But the question is on many lips, "Are the reports of these mysterious phenomena true? and are the phenomena so out of relations with nature that science can take no note of them?"

Phenomena for which science has no explanation will be soil for the growth of superstitions. The writer, in common with many others, has felt that the time has come for more rigid scientific methods in the treatment of the strange phenomena which underlie what is called "Spiritualism." Out of abundant materials he has selected a group of "manifestations" which are representative, and which will afford a starting-point in the investigation.

Our narrative must be somewhat personal. For obvious reasons we shall suppress the true names of persons and places, and substitute fictitious ones.

Northminster is a large and thrifty village not many miles from Boston. Of course, it has its winter round of lectures; and, of course, its lecture-committee practice a generous hospitality. One evening, while the guest of Mr. Way, a member of this committee, he said to me that the peace of his house had been disturbed by certain strange sounds. They had been occurring for months. He could trace them to no natural cause; but he had found that they occurred only in the presence of his little boy, Harry. The child, he was sure, was innocent, and, from his age (only eight), incapable of trickery or deception. The noises were made at any time of the day or night, but were loudest at night, or in a darkened room. Mr. Way and his family were greatly perplexed, and had resorted to every device to solve the mystery.

The noises came spontaneously, or they could be evoked at will. My host wished me to make some investigations, and assist him, if possible, to a solution. I consented; and little Harry was summoned, and placed in a chair near the center-table. There was no "apparatus," nothing to conceal, and no motive to deceive. In what way Harry's presence was necessary for the production of these sounds, I did not know; but that he could make them was a physical impossibility. I sat by his side, and held his hands in mine; but still the mysterious sounds were heard all around us, — never at a greater distance than six feet. Sometimes they appeared like a shower of gentle raps on the table or on the wall; sometimes like the heavy strokes of a hammer; and sometimes like the rubbing of a hand on the hard surface. I observed, that, as Harry grew drowsy, the sounds grew faint. We allowed him to

drop into a sleep, and the noises ceased: we roused him, and they began again. They were always loudest when the child was most wakeful, and faintest when he was drowsiest. This was a new phase. When the philosopher comes who shall read us the law of these phenomena, he may find a clew in the fact that the *pitch* of the sounds depends on the animation of the so-called medium.

My experiments were made under many conditions, and I soon found that the manifestations varied with the degree of light. In a strong light, the sounds were few and feeble: in total darkness, they were many and loud. This looked suspicious, but the severest scrutiny convinced me that no deception was possible. A tea-bell and a violin were placed on the table. In the full gas-light only faint raps were heard; I turned off the gas slowly, and the raps grew louder; I turned it off entirely, and they seemed sharp enough to have split the table. Suddenly they ceased; and the violin began to play a familiar tune, and the bell to ring an accompaniment. I sat between the father and child, and neither of them moved. It would have been a physical impossibility for the child to do these things, and both a physical and moral impossibility for the father to do them. I saw no way to escape the conclusion that some force other than that lodged in human muscles was making these demonstrations; and that force, whatever it was, was guided by intelligence. The music was of human composition. One tune was played, — a familiar national air, — and then, at our request, another and another. Was there some unseen intelligence here who could hear my words, or read the thoughts passing in my mind? I turned on

the gas till the light was just sufficient to reveal the letters on a printed page. The music ceased, and loud raps were heard on and under the table. "If there is any intelligence back of these sounds," I said to Mr. Way, "I think we should find it out." Three loud raps were made on the table.

"Is there a man here making these sounds?"

Three raps again on the table.

"Do these three raps mean yes? Repeat them if they do."

Again three raps.

"What do you mean for no?"

One rap was made.

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"Yes."

"If I call the alphabet, will you rap on the letters which will give me your name?"

"Yes."

I called the alphabet, and was stopped by three sharp taps on the letter E. I commenced again, and was stopped on the letter B. At a third calling, the taps were again made on E. So I went on until the name of Ebenezer K. Hymer was spelled out. I had never heard of such a name; and, with a mental protest against the proceeding, I said to the seeming nothingness, "Mr. Hymer, I have not the honor of your acquaintance."

"No," with a loud rap.

"Well," I rejoined, "if you have any thing to say, we will go on with the alphabet."

I went on calling over the letters; and Mr. Hymer — or whatever it was — spelled out, "Was a teacher of music in Fitchdale."

I went on with the alphabet, asking questions, for the most part so trivial, I fear, as to betray a suspicion that my interlocutor was not a visitant from another world, and getting answers as sensible, at least, as the questions. Finally I said, —

"Mr. Hymer, is your wife with you?"

"No!" with a tremendous rap.

"Perhaps I am too fast: perhaps you had no wife. Mr. Hymer, were you married?"

"Y-e-s," spelled out by three low, hesitating raps, as if he, or it, or whatever you choose, had said, "Very slightly married." Strange sounds followed these raps. I called the alphabet, and my interlocutor said, "Was unhappily married; separated from my wife; wish to identify myself."

"Can you tell me, then, of any man who knew you?"

In answer to my question, the name of a distinguished reformer was given. A short message to this gentleman followed, and I withdrew.

I can not say that the events of the evening made a very deep impression on me. Such events are too far removed from the common course of life to adjust themselves readily to our science or philosophy.

Because they baffle us, we let them alone. "What shall we do with these facts?" said the author of "Planchette, the Despair of Science." — "Do with them?" replied a distinguished critic: "let them alone." I took the advice of this critic, and was in a fair way to forget my friend the ghost, and his demonstrations on the fiddle. But circumstances brought me in contact with the reformer. In the course of our conversation, I said to him, "Mr. ——, I met a friend of

yours the other week, and he sent a message to you." — "What friend?" he asked.

"He was a stranger to me," I said: "but he introduced himself as Ebenezer K. Hymer."

"Why," said the reformer, "I knew a man of that name, but he has been dead more than a year." I told my friend what I have just told the reader. He said to me that he had known a Mr. Hymer, a music-teacher; that he had been unhappily married; had separated from his wife; and that he had died at such a time, — the same as that indicated by the sounds on the table.

I thought less of the critic's advice. After this interview, I could not well let the facts alone. On mature reflection, I did not know why they should be let alone. I know that the phenomena demand in the investigation the largest measure of incredulity, and the utmost care. Even our senses may deceive us. But here I could entertain no appeal from the senses. For nearly two hours I was listening to sounds which the severest scrutiny failed to trace to any visible agent. I had as much evidence that these sounds proceeded from some intelligence, as the telegraph-operator has that an intelligence makes the little raps which he translates into a message.

Suppose I had passed the evening in a telegraph-office. Sitting before the index, I might have heard clicks, or "raps," which came from no agent visible to me. A little attention would have shown me that they came from some intelligence, and that they were symbols of speech. Suppose I had learned the symbols, and they had told me that Ebenezer K. Hymer was telegraphing. Not knowing such a man, I would have

waited for his message, expecting him to say something which it concerned me to know. If he had gone on using the electric fluid to tell me his occupation, his residence, his domestic infelicity, and closed by dictating some trivial message to a man in a distant part of the State, — a man whom I barely knew, — I would have thought the communication unworthy of my attention, and dismissed it from my thoughts. If, after a few weeks, I had delivered the message to Mr. ——, and he had told me that he knew such a man as Mr. Hymer, and that what he had telegraphed to me about himself was true, I would still have been at a loss for the motive. And if Mr. ——, sharing my perplexity, had said that he knew Mr. Hymer as a man of rare powers of mind, I might have thought, either that some one was playing on my credulity, or that Mr. Hymer had lost his wits. No interest would attach to the *mode* in which the communication came; for we understand that. Mr. Hymer's erratic proceeding would attract no further notice.

The case at Mr. Way's is almost identical with this. The message was trivial, and, so far as I can know, without purpose. It was utterly unworthy of Mr. Hymer the musician. You may say that, if it is genuine, it only proves that if death does not come to the soul, it takes away the wit. You do not believe this; and, therefore, you do not believe that the spirit of Mr. Hymer indited the message. Very well: Science, perhaps, can not entertain this question, but she must soon entertain the other, — "How are these manifestations produced?" She must pursue the same method as in other fields: she has no right to assume that spirits are the agents, or that they are not. "Spirit,"

said Sir David Brewster, "is the very last thing I will give in to." This was not said in the true spirit of science. We must give in to any thing which proves itself, and not assume that our chemistries have revealed to us every force in the universe, and found no place for spirit. "If the plant could think," said Garth Wilkinson, "it might say that animals are illusions. They come and go out of dead spaces by no vegetable law; and our science of stumps avers that birds are apparitions, and that the birdless and beastless wilderness is vegetable orthodoxy."

Science must take nothing on *à priori* grounds, but apply to all phenomena her own well-tried methods.

No man would think of establishing the glacial epoch on a single boulder. The geologist sees a boulder here, another there; planed and striated ledges in the valleys, others on the mountains; he finds glaciers on the mountain's slopes of Switzerland planing and scratching the ledges, and transporting blocks of granite. He puts these facts side by side, and deduces from them "The Glacial Theory of the Drift." The strange noises at the house of Mr. Way are to science as a single boulder by the wayside. They must be studied in the light of other phenomena.

I learned from Mr. Way, that, before these noises were ever heard in the presence of his child, the boy would pass now and then into an abnormal state, and see visions. He would describe persons and things, which, to the senses of the father, had no existence. His actions resembled those of a mesmeric subject. Does mesmerism, then, offer a key for the solution of these mysterious sounds, and the intelligence which spoke through them? This would seem like complicating the

problem by introducing another unknown factor. But we are not entirely ignorant of mesmerism. Anatomy has done something to take it from the region of the marvelous, and reveal its laws. She could not have done such service until the science of electrics helped her to understand the structure and functions of a nerve.

A nerve is a delicate fiber, sheathed in a membrane. It is analogous to a telegraph-wire; and the investing membrane serves the same purpose as the tubes of glass through which the wire is made to pass where it rests on a support. Like the glass, the membrane is a non-conductor. It prevents the escape of the essence which passes along the nerve, as the glass prevents the escape of the electric fluid which passes along the wire. The analogy does not end here. The vascular parts of the nervous system form "stations" for the arrest and diffusion of the essence which passes over the fiber. Nor does the analogy end even here. You send your thought by the wire; and the electric fluid will carry it, as recent experiments of the American Coast Survey show us, at the speed of four thousand miles in eight-tenths of a second. From your brain you send a mandate along a nerve to your hand; and, if you are a man of average quickness of thought, it will travel, as the experiments of Helmholtz show us, with a speed of two hundred feet a second. If you are very sluggish, Helmholtz will tell us that the message travels only eighty feet a second. The mechanism of the nervous system is essentially that of the electric telegraph. The brain is the battery. If your hand is in danger of burning, you send a mandate through the nerve down to the

appropriate muscles. They contract, and your hand is withdrawn. Something — you may call it nerve-fluid — passed along the nerve, as the electric fluid passes along the wire. Let us pass now to the brain.

The brain takes note, not of real objects, but of their representations. Al Hassan did a great service when he demonstrated that the ray of light does not pass from the eye to the object, as all the philosophers had taught, but from the object to the eye. We are just learning the significance of the Arab's demonstration. Rays of light flowing from an object into the eye shake the optic lobes of the brain, and we see, not the object but a representation of it. Now, if any other force could affect the optic lobes of my brain as light affects them, I would see, although in utter darkness; and if any other force could shake the auditory centers as sound shakes them, I would hear, although in the silence of an Arctic night; and if, my brain being quiescent, any other mind could induce in it those motions which my own thoughts induce, I would act and speak the thoughts of that mind as if they were my own: I would be "mesmerized." And if that something called nerve-fluid could pass from the brain of one man into the passive brain of another, this mesmeric state would ensue. When the operator imagined a landscape, the motions induced in his brain would be repeated in the receptive brain of the subject, and he would see what the operator only imagined. When the operator imagined sounds, the subject for the same reason would hear them. The picture of a landscape projected from the active into the passive brain shakes the optic

lobes, just as rays flowing from a real landscape would shake them. Sounds imagined in the active brain affect the auditory centers of the passive brain just as real sounds would affect them; and thoughts rising in one brain produce the same motions in the other, as the electric fluid clicks the same symbols in the office which receives the dispatch as in that which sent it. Unlike the electric fluid, the nerve-fluid will pass, under certain conditions, from station to station, from brain to brain, directly, and without the aid of a conducting nerve.

Any one who has given serious attention to this subject will see that our analogies are not fanciful. An eminent physician of Philadelphia, who was making some investigations on the "odyle" of Reichenbach, told me that he went one day to hear a "trance-medium," an "inspirational" speaker. The medium was a frail, sensitive woman, and one of the most successful speakers of her class. The doctor went to try an experiment. He wrote out a very short lecture, memorized it, and tore up the manuscript. When he entered the hall, the audience had assembled, and the medium sat on the platform. He fixed his eye on her, and, by a strong effort of will, caused her to rise and walk forward to the desk. Then he thought over his lecture, keeping his will on her, and she delivered it, word for word, as the words rose up in his mind. The woman intended no deception. She knew that she was not speaking her own thoughts; and, very naturally, she referred the control to a spirit.

Now, *something* must have passed from the doctor's mind into the brain of the medium. There was no speech, no gesture, no visible sign; and yet the thoughts

matured in one brain were passing by a subtile chemistry into the brain of another. I think they were carried there on waves of nerve-fluid, or "odyle," as thoughts are carried from station to station on waves of electricity; and I think they were uttered from the woman's lips as they were shaped in the doctor's brain because each odylic wave falling into her brain produced there the same motions as those in which it was generated.

The doctor's experiment does not stand alone. When Dr. Bell began the investigation of Spiritualism, he was surprised to find the mediums echoing back his own thoughts. He supposed that these persons had the power, in some mysterious way, of looking into our minds and seeing what is passing there. He was perplexed and baffled, and stopped the investigation, denying the intervention of spirits, but not claiming to have explained the phenomena. Others have had the same experience. I have had it myself. Since I began to investigate these things, I have often found my own thoughts coming back to me from the entranced sensitive; but I soon discovered that this occurred only when I was fixing my mind more or less intently on the sensitive, and unconsciously mesmerizing her or him. I have no doubt that a great part of that which comes to us from these persons, even when they are honest and do not mean to deceive, is only the reflection of what is passing in the minds of good, fleshly, solid men and women who are present at the sittings. But I question very seriously the position of Dr. Bell, that *every thing* which comes from the entranced sensitive is taken from the mind of some living person. There is another class of facts which

we will do well to study before we make up our verdict.

Clairvoyance is one of the most common phases of mediumship. The sensitive claims to see what is passing in distant places, and even claims to see spirits. We can not pronounce on the latter claim, but we can often test the validity of the former. Dr. R. has had a somnambule under his professional care. The patient was a young girl who was in the habit of rising in the darkest nights, repairing to a little room in which she was learning to paint, and there, in utter darkness, mixing her paints, and painting landscapes. To witness this, the doctor tells me he has passed more than one entire night in the little studio, waiting for the coming of the girl. When the darkness has been so deep that he could not see her form, he has heard her come in, mix her paints, and begin to paint. Occasionally she would enter this abnormal state in the day-time, when she would describe things that were passing in distant places. At such times the doctor bandaged her eyes, and tested her powers of vision on objects near by. When not a ray of light could fall on her eye, she would read a printed page held before her or behind, or even placed in another room. After thorough investigation, the doctor concludes, first; *that this girl can see without the body's eyes, and hear without the body's ears;* second, that, in these abnormal states, she is not under the control of a mesmerist. The doctor's methods are rigidly scientific. Every one who has read his monograph on the Botany of Mt. Washington would ascribe to him the trained powers of a scientist; and every one who knows him knows his simple love of truth. Raps like those I witnessed

at the house of Mr. Way occurred in the presence of his patient, and she claimed the power of seeing spirits. Of course, he could not test the genuineness of this power, but the raps, he found, were made by some intelligence unknown to him. We are putting these facts side by side, to deduce, if possible, the law which underlies them. It must occur to the reader as a very significant fact, that the somnambule, the clairvoyant, the mesmeric subject, and the "medium," bear a family likeness. He will infer some peculiarity in the organization of these persons; and he will try to interpret one class of facts in light borrowed from the others. Some light, we trust, has been thrown on mesmerism; and mesmerism, in turn, may throw light on the kindred phenomena.

How does the somnambule paint in the dark, or, becoming clairvoyant, read through bandaged eyes and a brick wall? Either her organism is controlled by another mind, or her spiritual senses are quickened, and she sees and thinks as a spirit freed from the body. But if another person controls her, and sees and hears and paints through her organs, who and where is he? If Dr. R., by a mere effort of will, can make her see and hear what he imagines, it is the doctor's *spirit* which does this: and is a spirit *out* of the body less potent than one *in* the body? Is there any reason why a spirit may not mesmerize or "obsess" a sensitive, if a man in his body of flesh and blood can do this by using only his spiritual powers? In an after-dinner talk, an English author once told me a story which gave me the material of much serious thought. His daughter, who was present at the interview, was a mesmeric subject, or, taking the word from Reichen-

bach, a sensitive. Some years ago, his son — I think an only surviving son — went to Australia; his parents had received a letter from him, and he had written in good health and spirits. One evening, soon after the receipt of the letter, the daughter was entranced, and made to write, unconsciously, a communication claiming to be from her brother Edward. The import of this communication was that he, the brother, had been drowned a few days before in a little lake back in the interior. The communication was circumstantial, giving date and details of the accident. Some months would have to elapse from the date of the drowning before a letter from Melbourne could reach London. The parents waited, months passed, and a letter came from a nephew in Melbourne, bearing the tidings that Edward was drowned on such a day, in such a lake, with such and such attendant circumstances. Date, place, and all the essential details, were the same as those given months before through their entranced daughter! What shall we say? I confess that I see no escape from the conclusion of the father and mother, that the freed spirit of their son wrote the communication through the hand of his sister. I know that many will shrink from such a conclusion, and say with Sir David, that "spirit is the last thing they will give in to." Is it because we believe, with an English savant, that "science is banishing the idea of spirit from the world"?

It is hard to bring this class of phenomena within the reach of science. When Swedenborg tells us of seeing spirits, we have nothing for it but his word, and science can take no note of that. But when he tells us that the spirits with whom he held converse, when

doing certain things, induced in him the smell of sulphur, he asserts a thing, which, if true, has its root in physics; and science may take note of it. If this was hallucination in Swedenborg, two senses were under the spell. Now, clairvoyants who have never read a word of Swedenborg have told me that, while seeing visions, they have often been annoyed by the smell of sulphur. If they were under an hallucination, the same senses were affected in the same way as in Swedenborg. This coincidence is at least remarkable. Many a fact in physical science rests on a basis not more secure than the assumption that this coincidence is the result of a real, though to us intangible thing, affecting the olfactories. And, if we assume this, we have something for science to lay hold of.

Every one knows that science, under the impulse of such men as Faraday and Tyndall, has been very busy with the imponderables. An imponderable, all-pervasive fluid is electricity. Another imponderable is ozone. I do not know that science can tell us precisely what it is: oxygen, let us say, which has acquired energetic properties; oxygen in the electro-negative state, formed by the green leaves of trees, and by the friction of wind; formed wherever electricity is set free in the air. It is the action of electricity on oxygen which forms ozone; and the odor of ozone is something like that of sulphur. Was it *ozone* which Swedenborg meant when he spoke of sulphur? Is it ozone which the sensitives of our own time *think* they smell when they have their visions? Let us remember that these imponderables take us very near to the spiritual.

It was the cherished belief of an eminent New-

England divine and geologist that electricity forms the spirit-body. Of all things known to man, it is the most subtile, most pervasive, most like life, most like spirit. Odyle and animal magnetism are other names for a peculiar phase or manifestation of the same thing; for we know nothing of electricity, only a very little of its manifestations. If I had placed little Harry on a stool with glass legs, the raps on the table would have ceased, or grown faint. Am I to infer, then, as some have done, that these phenomena are simply electrical, and think I have reached the end of the matter? I will infer that the force by which the raps were made was some form of electricity, taken from the person of the child, and, unless I ignore a vast accumulation of facts, I must say, "Taken by some intelligent agent." If my body were more ethereal, if my touch were more delicate, if my knowledge of the chemistries of electricity and ozone (which lie too far within the realm of the spiritual for our gross senses) were more perfect, I too might handle these imponderables as I am now handling the pen, and the Swedenborgs who saw me would think that I vexed them with the smell of sulphur. "The Catholic World" would conclude to call me a spirit, and think me a lost spirit coming in the very fumes of brimstone! But the Sir David Brewsters would never "give in to me," and Prof. Huxley would be after me with Nicolai's black cat.

What service that ghostly cat has done! The very learned professor would try every case of ghost-seeing by that of Nicolai. It will be remembered that when the bookseller's health improved, the apparition of the black cat ceased to haunt him. Nicolai was evidently under an hallucination. Nobody will believe that a

real "spirit-cat" was revealed to his senses. The cat was "subjective." Whatever Nicolai saw, it was wholly in himself. Is this a type of all clairvoyants?

When Fraunhofer had mapped out the dark lines of the solar spectrum, and found that certain lines answer to the lines made by burning sodium, others to those of burning hydrogen, and others to those of burning iron, his first thought was that these lines in the spectrum came from sodium and hydrogen and iron burning in the sun. It was a magnificent vision,—those dark lines lying athwart the brilliant zones of the spectrum, lifting our eyes from the world around us and revealing the elements that burn in the sun. A second thought suggested a doubt. May not these dark lines originate in our atmosphere? Are they not of the earth rather than the sun? Stellar spectra must be examined. If the lines found in the light of any star differ in the least from those found in the sun's light, the cause must lie *outside* of our world, and beyond the limits of our atmosphere. It must be in the sun and the star. The vision will be a revelation of other worlds.

Prof. Huxley would say of all clairvoyant visions what the doubt of the optician suggested of the lines of the spectrum: "They are subjective. As the lines do not take us away from our earth, so the visions do not take us away from ourselves. They belong to this little world within us." Fraunhofer's doubt was ill founded. And is not Huxley's assertion? As Fraunhofer tried the question by many spectra, so must we try this question by many visions. What would Prof. Huxley do with this little story? I have it from the lips of an accomplished authoress. She told it to me

as her father told it to her, and I tell it here because it will illustrate our argument: —

A few years ago, Mr. H., the father of my informant, was captain of the ship Ann, which was owned in Richmond by a Mr. Robinson. Captain H. was sailing from Richmond to Rio with a cargo of flour.

The Ann had passed the capes of Virginia, and was going along smoothly with an eight-knot breeze, when Capt. H. turned in to sleep. It was the first night out, and between twelve and four o'clock, when he dreamed that he saw Robinson, the owner, standing beside his berth dressed, as usual, in a long black coat. He woke, thought nothing of the dream, and dropped to sleep. He dreamed the same dream again. He awoke a second time, and thought it a little strange that Robinson, in that long black coat, should haunt his dreams. Again he dropped into a sleep, and a third time dreamed the same dream. When he rose in the morning, he observed strange movements among the crew, who were colored men. He called the mate, and asked what was the matter with the men. "Why, sir," said he, "a ghost was seen here last night." — "A *ghost!*" said the captain: "tell me what he looked like." — "Well, sir," replied the mate, "he was a tall man, dressed in a long black coat, and he stood at the leeward gangway. He looked just like Mr. Robinson." — "Did any other person see him?" asked the captain. "Yes, sir," said the mate; "the whole watch saw him." The captain called the watch, and examined the men separately. Each man testified to having seen the ghost, and said that it wore a long black coat, and stood at the leeward gangway, and looked like Robinson.

The Ann made a quick passage to Rio. No letters

awaited the captain. The flour was sold; he started for home, and, in due time, the Ann was again off the Capes of Virginia. When the pilot-boat came alongside, Mr. Ramsay, the pilot, broke the news to the captain that Robinson was dead; that he died the first night his ship was out; and that his mind, to the last, was on the ship.

A few points in this story are worth a moment's consideration. On such a night Robinson was dying, and his mind, even in death, was fixed on his ship. On the same night, the captain of that ship dreamed three times that Robinson was there in the ship, standing by his side; and, the same night, the mate, the cook, and the watch, saw a ghostly form which looked like Robinson, standing at the leeward gangway. The cook saw that shadowy form move from the gangway, and pass into the captain's cabin. No one would question the pilot's story of what was passing that night in Richmond. I do not see how any one can question the captain's story of what was passing, the same night, on board the Ann. Does the coincidence pass for nothing? Were captain, mate, cook, and watch, all under an hallucination?

It is not often that I would appeal from the modern scientist to the ancient theologian; but, in the name of science herself, I must appeal from Prof. Huxley to St. Augustine. We find him writing to a bishop of his day, who thought he had a visitation from three deceased friends, "that there are false visions, and doubtless true ones; and we must study carefully to discriminate the true from the false."

But the ghost of that long black coat! Does an old coat or an old hat have a soul? When the seer

testifies to seeing an apparition in the same old coat or boots or hat which the defunct had worn on the streets, is not the scientist right in dismissing the whole thing as a delusion? You think so. I have thought so; but I always had a lurking suspicion that the solution is too simple to answer all the conditions of a problem so complicated. We must remind you again that the brain takes cognizance, not of *things*, but the representation of things; and that it is possible for one mind to govern the perceptions of another by magnetic emanations affecting the optic lobes as light, the auditory centers as sound, and making the thing *imagined* in the controlling mind a seeming *reality* in the passive one. A very sensible man told me once of a visit he had made to a notorious medium,— Foster, I think. My friend went out of sheer curiosity, having no faith in the powers claimed by the medium. He went *incog.* Foster soon passed into an abnormal, though not an unconscious state, and, turning to Mr. H., said, "Mr. J—— H——, an old lady stands by your side, who tells me she is your grandmother." — "If she is my grandmother," said Mr. H., "she can tell you her name." — "Your maternal grandmother, Margaret R——," was the prompt reply. "Well," said Mr. H., "can you describe her?" Foster then gave a minute description of an aged lady, with a peculiar cap, a slight scar on the left hand, a few pits left by the small-pox on her face, and a wig of gray hair on her head. The lady, he said, lifted her cap, and showed him that her luxuriant hair was a wig. "Now, that," said my friend, "was an accurate description of my grandmother, even to her frilled cap, the scar on her hand, the pits in her face, and her vener-

able wig! I do not believe that my grandmother was there, and I do not believe that the dear old lady wears in heaven the ghost of a wig and the ghost of a frilled cap, nor that she has a scarred hand and pitted face. I can't believe a word of that: but how did the man Foster get the description of her? That puzzles me, for he never saw her nor heard of her, and his description was not a reflection from my own mind, for I was not thinking about her." Now, *I* do not believe that caps and wigs have ghosts, or that bodily defects are carried beyond the grave; but I can understand, how, if the grandmother was there, and wished to identify herself, she could make the clairvoyant *think* he saw her in the same features and vestments she wore on earth.

Shakspeare is still the best text-book in psychology; and he makes the ghost of Hamlet's father appear in

> . . . . ." that fair and warlike form
> In which the majesty of buried Denmark
> Did sometimes march."

"*Mar.* Is it not like the king?
Hor. As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armor he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polack on the ice.
'Tis strange.

. . . . . .

Ham. Then saw you not his face?
Hor. Oh, yes, my lord! he wore his beaver up.
Ham. What, looked he frowningly?
Hor. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Ham. Pale, or red?
Hor. Nay, very pale.

Ham. And fixed his eye upon you?
Hor. Most constantly.
Ham. His beard was grizzled? no?
Hor. It was, as I have seen it in his life, a sable silver'd."

It was Coleridge who said that no wise man would speak with contempt of mesmerism, for it might be the refraction of a truth which is still below the horizon. The poet, the novelist, and the artist catch the beams of the rising truth before the scientist. If you read Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier, Bulwer, Mrs. Stowe, or Dickens, you might think that the age cherishes a profound belief in the immanence of a world of spirits. If you read the standard works on science, you might say, with one of her great masters, that science is banishing the idea of spirit from the minds of men. "Skepticism," said Prof. Huxley at Charing Cross, "is the highest duty: blind faith the unpardonable sin." "No one who has eyes to see," says a German savant, "can fail to remark that belief in the immortality of the soul has long been effaced from ordinary life." The tenderest thought of Emerson, following the soul of a dying child, could shape itself into no hope of a continued individual life, but only into this exquisite pantheism: —

> "The master, Death, with sovereign rite
> Pours finite into infinite."

From the great naturalist and from the high thinker I turn for relaxation to "Our Mutual Friend."

"For when I was a little child," — this is Jenny Wren, the poor cripple, — "the children that I used to see early in the morning were very different from

any others that I ever saw. They were not like me: they were never chilled, anxious, ragged, or beaten; they were never in pain. They were not like the children of the neighbors: they never made me tremble all over by setting up such noises; and they never mocked me. Such numbers of them, too! All in white dresses, and with something shining on the borders and on their heads. They used to come down in long, bright, slanting rows, and say, 'Who is this in pain? Who is this in pain?' When I told them it was me, they answered, 'Come and play with us.' When I answered, 'I never play; I can't play,' they swept about me, and took me up and made me light. Then it was all delicious ease and rest. Whenever they came, I used to know they were coming, before I saw the long bright rows, by hearing them ask, 'Who is this in pain? Who is this in pain?' And I used to cry out, 'O my blessed children! it's poor me. Have pity on me!'"

Now, if this could never have happened in real life, Dickens is a poor artist; but if any poor, sorrowing child was ever lifted up out of darkness by visions of brighter beings and a better world, the novelist has seen farther into life than the scientist or the great thinker, and his picture of the ecstacies of the "doll's dressmaker" is true art.

But the scientist is getting the ear of the age, and Huxley is right. Blind faith *is* the unpardonable sin. The methods of science require proof; and the scientific spirit is dominant over every field of inquiry. If it is true, then, that the thinkers who have felt most deeply the impulse from physical science, question most the old faith in a continued, conscious life after

death, such thinkers will return to the old faith only through the door of science.

Here is a high mission for those masters who are filling our minds with such high philosophies of heat, light, lightning, *force*. Already they have shown us, that, when any force is expended in one form, it reappears in another. And already they have shown us, that, beyond the vail of phenomena, there is but one force. Their methods have brought them to the verge of a mystery greater than any they have solved.

"Nothing is lost," they tell us and prove to us. The question of Sir William Grove, then, is a pertinent one: "Where is the light radiated into space from the innumerable suns? It is non-recurrent in any forms known to us. It can not be lost. Where is it?" Equally pertinent is the question, What becomes of the force which dominated the human body? We call it "life," or "spirit." It is certainly as real a thing as light or electricity. It leaves the body at death, and is non-recurrent in any form known to us. You have proved to us that it can not be lost, for you have proved that *no* force is ever lost. Where is it? Sir William thinks that the highest problem in celestial dynamics is that which concerns the continued existence and energy of the non-returning light poured into space from the suns. The problem which weighs heaviest on the hearts of men is that which concerns the continued existence of human souls, non-returning after the body's death. Where are they? Your discoveries have brought you to the very verge of the spiritual. Your logic will compel you to admit the continued existence of the spirit, for the spirit is a *force*. You find — or, if you keep your eyes open, and search with half the dili-

gence which inspires you in manipulating a wave of sound or a thread of light, you *can* find — manifestations of a force wonderfully like a human spirit, where no body is revealed to your senses. What is it?

You will remember a triumph of your elder brothers in science, the astronomers, whose souls grapple with the huge Titanic forces of the universe. They had seen a world circling on the outskirts of our system. They weighed it. They measured the forces pulling on it from the sun and from sister worlds, and mapped out its orbit. They looked again and found it rocking to and fro on its path. They searched their table of forces, and found no cause for that perturbation, and they said, "There must be another world circling beyond the orbit of Uranus, and, although invisible to us, a world the same in kind as Uranus."

You have scanned the finer forces and harmonies of nature, and, casting your eye along the table of forces, you have pronounced them all of one type; and that type, you have said, is Will.* You have passed upward through the series from form to form, finding one form convertible into another, and at the top you have found Mind.† Drop that from your chart, and then look out on the world of men. Like Uranus, it has its perturbations. It does not move smoothly in the orbit which science, taking no note of Mind apart from matter, would draw on her chart. Ezekiel, on the banks of the Chebar, was touched by a

* Dr. Carpenter, Human Philosophy.

† "Mind is a dynamical agent, capable of acting on matter" (Physiology, § 585).

Faraday, in his experiments on the electric eel, found that nerve-force is convertible into electric energy, and reciprocally. From the electric force so induced he derived magnetic and other modes of force.

spirit. Beatific visions cheered the soul of John on Patmos. Voices sounded on the ear of Joan. Apparitions of white-robed beings of a happier sphere have soothed the spirit of many a poor Jenny Wren. To the savage, the whole world seems swarming with spiritual beings. In his dreams he sees them; he holds converse with them; he propitiates them; he lives among them. Voices, visions, trances, have been known and *are* known among all peoples. If the astronomer could infer the existence of the unseen planet from its pull on the orbit of Uranus, shall not science infer from these visions, voices, trances, an unseen world of intelligence circling around this?

But we must not take our lesson from the savage, and give ourselves up to the guidance of specters. We are in no danger of that. Let the savage do as he may, culture has made us self-reliant, and we will brook no interference from a world of specters. Shakspeare is still our teacher. The great dramatist, after bringing Hamlet's own father back to the eyes of the son, makes the son so faithless as to soliloquize about death and

> . . . "the something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveler returns."

We speak for no class or party. Is it too much to hope that the candid reader, spiritualist or not spiritualist, who has followed us through these pages, will accept the following conclusions as fair deductions from our facts? —

First, that there is another realm of being, a world of men and women, invisible to us, but *real.*

Second, that under certain conditions, and using certain peculiar organizations as media, these persons can manifest themselves to us; but —

Third, that those who return and obsess the mediums, or "rap," or tip tables, or haunt houses, are generally unresting spirits. They are not done with earth. What we call the "blue disease" in a young child is something of the fœtal life lingering still in the higher life. The unquiet spirits who break through the vail and haunt us in sounds or apparitions, have in them something analogous to the "blue disease."

Fourth, that sometimes they are able to identify themselves to persons who knew them while living on the earth; but —

Fifth, that their power to utter their thoughts through the sensitive, or medium, being mesmeric and the same in kind as that which we possess over the same organizations, it is often impossible to tell whether the thoughts which come from the entranced are inspired by a spirit, or by ourselves, who are spirits in a grosser form.

Sixth, that the difference between their state and ours is so great, and their powers of communicating with us so feeble, that a great part of that which comes to us in their name is vague sounding and worthless. And, —

Finally, that the condition called mediumship, subjecting the person to all kinds of influx, bad as well as good, is not congenial to mental or moral health, and should not be cultivated.

In reaching these conclusions, I have not been unmindful of some gems of thought and expression inspired through unconscious mediums, nor of the pure

lives of some who have the gift of mediumship, nor of the consolations which not a few have found in the belief that words of endearment have come to them from loved ones who have "passed within the vail."

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